

Testimony Concerning Universal Health Care
Universal Health Care Public Hearing – January 31, 2007

Carol Nardini, LCSW, Director
Orange Community Services
525 Orange Center Rd.
Orange, CT 06477
Phone: 203-891-2154
Fax: 203-891-2191
E-mail: cnardini@orange-ct.gov

In the almost-27 years that I have been practicing social work, lack of accessible, quality health care has been an ever growing problem. From my perspective as a Director of a town-sponsored, multi-program social services agency, I see two specific areas where this is evidenced.

First, over the years, clients of all ages, including residents over the age of 65, have had difficulty in keeping up with the rocketing costs of insurance premiums, co-pays, and prescription medication. In the final years of General Assistance administration, I found as the Local Welfare Administrator that over 90 percent of our caseload consisted of the medically needy. Orange, although considered a "wealthy" town, is very much like most communities in the state; that is, many residents are one job away from losing health benefits. Also, it is not unusual for me to see residents who are working full time whose company does not offer health benefits, or the health benefits that are offered are prohibitively expensive.

Secondly, as a social worker, I am increasingly troubled by the confusing array of health-related social programs that have different age, asset, and income guidelines. Also add Medicare Part D to this mix, and we have wound up with a system that is not user friendly and is difficult to access.

Health care is a right, not a privilege. It is in Connecticut's best interest to insure that its children, adults, and elderly get preventive medical and dental care, and behavioral health services. It is cheaper then placing people on Medicaid, or using our overcrowded hospital emergency rooms.

I am not as naive as to believe that we can have universal health care and not cut back somewhere else. With universal health care, we could possibly combine programs such as Husky and ConnPACE. The idea is to develop a seamless healthcare system from "womb to tomb" that is understandable, accessible, and comprehensive.

Thank you.